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# THEATRE WORLD



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# Theatre World

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## October, 1945

THE current unprecedented boom in the West End theatre is something of an embarrassment for an editor of a theatre magazine in these days of paper rationing. It has become quite impossible to feature in pictures all the successful plays of merit which are gracing the London stage at the present time.

We shall have three of Sheridan's best plays running in London in a few weeks' time. *The School for Scandal* has already come into the Arts Theatre Festival of Drama, which looks like repeating this theatre's previous successful Festival of Comedy. (Farquhar's *The Constant Couple* and *Hamlet* are still to be added, and the complete repertoire will be reviewed in our next issue). Sheridan's *The Rivals*, with Edith Evans, began its run at the Criterion on September 25th, and his *The Critic*, with Laurence Olivier as Puff, goes into The Old Vic season at the New, on October 10th.

*A Bell for Adano*, in which Robert Beatty has made a big personal success in the part taken in the New York production by Fredric March, is another new successful play which will be reviewed next month. Meantime, space has not allowed lengthy reviews of the many interesting plays recently at the Embassy Theatre. They have another big success in their current amusing comedy, *Fit for Heroes*, the moral of which is that even a Peer of the realm and his Lady can live happily ever afterwards in a Portal, providing the butler sleeps out and the family keeps away. Irene Vanbrugh, Raymond Lovell and Olaf Pooley give outstanding performances.

On October 23rd, the Sadler's Wells Governors present—for a limited season—Roy Lombert's production of James Bridie's comedy, *The Forrigan Reel*, with music by

Cedric Thorpe Davie. Alastair Sim stages—and appears in—the piece, the action of which passes in 1740, in Speyside, Scotland. It is not, however, an historical play.

The Mercury Theatre's one-play-a-month season has been successfully launched with Norman Nicholson's *The Old Man of the Mountains*, which will be followed in the week of November 5th by *This Way to the Tomb*, with Benjamin Britten music.

It would seem that Cicely Courtneidge has her best part ever in *Under the Counter*, which will reach London later on. Since it opened at Leeds, on September 10th, this new Lee Ephraim production has not played to an empty seat.

\* \* \*

Two articles in this issue pay tribute to the way the spirit of our people triumphed against all odds in these past grim years. They illustrate too what a great consolation the drama has been in the prisoner-of-war camps and the one bit of Great Britain occupied by the Germans, namely the Channel Islands. If we regret our lack of space for one reason more than another it is that we have been unable to print the many interesting letters which have reached these offices containing news of the manifold theatrical activities which have taken place wherever our Forces have been, from the Army of Occupation on the Rhine to the swamps of New Guinea.

It is good news that ex-service members of the theatrical profession are to be assisted in their efforts to get back into work. British Equity has opened a special Bureau at 17, Coventry Street, W.1, and another organisation called Reunion Theatre (connected largely with men serving in the Middle East) is active on the same lines.

F.S.

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# New Shows of the Month

- "Lady Windermere's Fan"—Haymarket,  
August 21st.  
"Sign No More"—Piccadilly, August 22nd.  
"The Hasty Heart"—Aldwych, August  
30th.  
"Young Mrs. Barrington"—Winter Garden,  
September 5th.  
"Merrie England"—Princes, September  
6th.

## "Lady Windermere's Fan"

THE measure of Wilde's artificiality is the measure of one's enjoyment of this revival, with its breath-taking Cecil Beaton decor and air of pleasing unreality. We are not hoodwinked by the manners or morals in the author's epigrammatic world; in our soberest moments we know the plot creaks, but who wants to be sober in the face of Beaton's be-ribboned Boudoir or the green-shadowed bachelor quarters of Act III (how right to credit the play's lighting by William Conway). This is the proper background for the pearls of wisdom (that is if they are not analysed too closely), which fall from the lips of Wilde's characters to profusion in this particular play. In a world of 'Oh yeahs' it is a mental luxury to wallow in such polished witticisms.

A goodly company of actors and actresses, the latter in Edwardian dresses of surpassing beauty, play out the story of London society's attitude to Mrs. Erlynne, whose youthful moral slip, but for her intervention, might have been repeated by her daughter, Lady Windermere, who never knew that Mrs. Erlynne was her mother. If Oscar Wilde could have been there, how he would have approved Isobel Jeans as Mrs. Erlynne. This is a performance of superb elegance.

Likewise, Athene Seyler is at her polished best as the loquacious Duchess of Berwick. Not quite so much at ease, however, is Dorothy Hyson as Lady Windermere, though colourless virtue of this sort is not easy to portray. Griffith Jones gives a sincere performance as Lord Darlington, as does Geoffrey Toone as Lord Windermere, and there are gems of period portrayal from Michael Shepley as Lord Augustus and Denys Blakelock as Mr. Cecil Graham.

(See also page 18).

## "Sign No More"

UNLIKE some of our authorities, Mr. Coward seems to recognise that war-weary London needs a gentler touch. Though his new revue does not lack the wit we expect as a right from this brilliant

source, sentiment balances the caustic shafts.

Cyril Ritchard, Madge Elliott and Joyce Grenfell are in top form, and the latter nearly stops the show with her solo items, particularly as a lanky, grinning school girl gloating over her family's misfortunes. Mr. Ritchard shines as an Indian Army Officer; in the exotic item "Nina" and as the embarrassed Master of the Pageant which goes wrong at every turn. Madge Elliott proves her versatility in a number of characters, grave and gay, young and elderly.

It falls to Graham Payn to sing the hit song of the show, "Matelot," a haunting, sentimental fisher song that well illustrates the gentler Coward and will be on all lips before long. Cliff Gordon, the clever impersonator, has a big hand for his rendering of the skit "Language—French—Troops, for the Use Of."

There are twenty-one items of great variety, including a "Blithe Spirit" Ballet (a bit too long this); an imaginative item about Willy's conscience and his good and bad angels; a delightful glimpse of Windsor in Victorian Times entitled "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and the amusing burlesque "Pageant," in which the whole company join with verve. Mantovani and his Orchestra have an item to themselves, and dancer Tom Linden pirouettes with amazing speed through the dance items arranged by Wendy Toye and others. The decor by G. E. Calthorp, suiting the pervading mood, is brilliant without being over elaborate.

## "The Hasty Heart"

THIS is not a war play along usual lines, which may account for its big success. The entire action takes place in the convalescent ward in an Assam-Burma border British Military Hospital, in which a group of Allied soldiers are called upon to befriend a young Scots sergeant, Lachlen, who is doomed to die in six weeks' time, though he does not at first know his fate. What they had not bargained for was the psychology of this stubborn, unfriendly, maddening boy, who would have been a tough problem for the most skilled psychiatrist. However, after a false start and a later setback, the lads, aided and abetted by a hospital sister of most unprofessional sympathy, and a complete Scots rig-out, sporran, kilt and all, win the sergeant's confidence by curtain fall. In spite of the theme, laughter predominates, though the more moving passages are very moving indeed.

Emrys Jones has achieved a big personal

*Mrs. Barrington*: "Martin's so particular. I remember when he was a little boy he had a stocking that didn't match. Oh! the fuss!"

Leueen MacGrath as Jo, Joan Haythorne as Mary Haddon and Elliot Mason as Mrs. Barrington, in Act II of *Young Mrs. Barrington*, at the Winter Garden Theatre.



triumph for a faultless performance as the young Scot sergeant Lachlen with his ill-concealed inferiority complex, though actually the other male characters are written more convincingly. There is Frank Leighton as the Australian, Jerry Verno as an 'obese' Cockney, John McLaren as 'Yank,' Nicholas Parsons as 'Kiwi,' the New Zealander, and Orlando Martins as 'Blossom,' from Basutoland. It is through this last character that the author, John Patrick (himself a soldier serving in Burma), reveals his undoubtedly sense of humour. 'Blossom,' who utters no word but 'Blossom,' and knows none, is the uncomprehending spectator of the Scots lad's determination to receive no man's pity on account of his imminent death. The moment when Blossom with childlike friendliness silently gives Lachlen a string of beads is a high spot in the play.

Margareta Scott is the ward sister whose warmly sympathy and efficiency mean so much to this interesting group of men.

(See also page 29)

### \* Young Mrs. Barrington \*

THIS new play by Warren Chetham Strode deals with a problem which has been exercising the imaginations of a number of authors of late. It is the problem of the re-adjustment of young married people who have been torn apart for long periods of time, and are now called upon to take up life together again.

Mr. Chetham Strode deals very effectively with his theme, and peoples his stage with some real people for whom we can feel a sympathetic attachment. *Young Mrs. Barrington* (Leueen MacGrath) waits with apprehension for the return of her pilot husband Martin, feeling that she may not capture the happiness of her whirlwind wartime honeymoon. In any case she has herself matured through her important war work and close link with her chief, Colonel Paul Renwick, and his dangerous secret work. Her worst fears are realised, and there are many adjustments to be made

before the two young people come together again.

Tom Gill appears as Martin, a rather irritating and obtuse young man, it seemed to me, though an R.A.F. hero. A lovely performance comes from Elliot Mason as Mrs. Barrington, Senior, a typical harassed suburban mother, possessive of her children, particularly Martin, but likeable all the same. Margaret Barton is Martin's young proselytising left-wing sister and Peter Hammond makes a lively and likely lad of Arthur, Martin's kid brother. Then there is the quiet and dignified Paul Renwick of *Ivan Samson* (all the time I had to fight a feeling that the Colonel deserved to get Jo), and Sidney King makes a sympathetic figure of Tim Acland, Martin's bibulous friend. Joyce Linden appears as Peggy, the unpleasant young girl from next door, and one of the best performances comes from Joan Haythorne as Mrs. Haddon, the girl's mother, and Jo's level-headed friend. Miss Haythorne's restrained acting and the dignity of her stage presence make it certain we shall see much more of her.

### "Merrie England"

NOTHING could detract from the delight of Edward German's popular music, but it was perhaps a pity to re-write the book to such an extent. *Merrie England* is good enough to stand on its own merit in its original form, but it seems to be the fashion nowadays to revise as well as revive.

However, this is a very lavish production with a very fine cast, and the enchanting music comes over as fresh as ever. Dennis Noble and Heddle Nash are in fine form, the former's "The Yeoman of England," and the latter's "The English Rose" being particularly well rendered. Linda Gray acts and sings with distinction as Queen Elizabeth. This new Edward Knoblock version of German's comic opera is presented by Jack Waller and produced by William Mollison.

The review of *Big Boy* (Saville, September 12th) is unavoidably held over until next month.



John Vickers

MARGARET JOHNSTON

(Right) : JILL MANNERS

Two charming personalities of the straight and musical stage. *Left*: Margaret Johnston, who had such a success in *The Last of Summer* year ago, is to have a leading role in *The Shouting Dies*, by Ronda Keane, the first play to be presented by The Company of Four at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, when it opens on October 4th. *Below*: Jill Manners whose lovely singing is a high spot of Eddie Littler's spectacular revue, *The Night and the Music*, at the Coliseum.



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Melinda tells the guests at Huntersmoon (Regency period) how she curtseyed to the King. A scene from Act I.

Front of picture, L. to R.: MARGARET RUTHERFORD as Lady Charlotte Fayre, IVOR NOVELLO as Sir Graham Rodney, ROMA BEAUMONT as Melinda, MURIEL BARRON as Lydia Lyddington, OLIVE GILBERT as Ernestine Flavelle and ROBERT ANDREWS as William Favre.

## "*Perchance to Dream*"

### AT THE HIPPODROME

IVOR Novello has achieved another spectacular success with his new romantic musical. Since *Perchance to Dream* opened at the Hippodrome on April 21st, the theatre has done capacity business and will undoubtedly continue to do so for a long time to come. At least one of the melodious tunes, "We'll Gather Lilacs," as proved a big hit and is a firm favourite with popular orchestras on the air and off.

As with his previous big musical triumphs, Mr. Novello has devised the entire show, having written the book and composed all the music. In addition, he himself plays the leading rôle and is on the stage during most of the production.

*Perchance to Dream* is set in three periods; Regency, 1818, Victorian, 1843, and Modern, 193—?; and tells the stories of two families who are linked by unhappy love affairs, against the background of the old

family mansion, Huntersmoon, until the modern scene, when the hero and heroine finally come together. Mr. Novello appears as an impoverished Regency landowner who takes to highway robbery; a notable choir-master of Victorian times and lastly as a modern young man. Melinda (1818), Melanie (1843), and Melody (Nineteen-thirties), played with charming vivacity by Roma Beaumont, provide the love interest, and the suggestion is that the lovers are the same personalities playing out their destinies in the three periods. Other leading players in the long cast are Muriel Barron, Margaret Rutherford and Olive Gilbert, whose singing is a high spot in the show. There is some delightful dancing to choreography by Frank Staff and the decor by Joseph Carl is most effective. The show is staged by William Newman, directed by Jack Minster and Tom Arnold presents.

PICTURES BY ALEXANDER BENDER



Lydia Lyddington, Drury Lane actress and mistress of Sir Graham, Rodney, greets her lover on his return to Huntersmoon. The time is 1818. Ernestine Flavelle, Regency opera, is resting on the couch.

*Below:* Sir Graham's aunt, Lady Charlotte Fayre, a Grand Dame of the Regency and a woman of the world, arrives with William Favre and Melina. Their coming leads to much upheaval.



Graham Rodney tells  
loving and faithful  
stress, Lydia Lydding,  
that much as he  
tes for her he has  
en in love and they  
must part.



Graham has fallen  
over heels in love  
h the simple and  
arming freshness of  
linda, his cousin.  
at Melinda does not  
now is that he is none  
er than the highway-  
on who stopped her  
uch and stole her rope  
of pearls.





(Left): William Fayre, who hates Sir Graham and suspects him, rightly, of being 'Frenchy, the highwayman,' and Sir Amyas Wendell who dislikes him too, set a trap to catch the highwayman-baronet. But he drugs their wine. (Right): Sir Graham, in his highwayman's attire, goes to Melinda's bedroom to restore the pearls.



The highwayman-baronet is rewarded with a kiss from his young cousin.



Outside the House, the next night, Sir Graham's romantic career comes to an unhappy end, when he dies in the arms of his beloved Melinda. But we are to see him again, reincarnated in the personalities of Valentine Fayre and Bay in the following scenes.



In the Hall at Huntersmoon, in 1843, Veronica (Muriel Barron) prepares for her wedding to Valentine Favre.



Valentine Fayre (Ivor Novello), up till now happily married, falls hopelessly in love with Melanie (Roma Beaumont), his wife's best friend.



After dinner, in the Victorian drawing room, while the gentlemen linger over their port, Lady Charlotte Fayre (Margaret Rutherford) plays spillokins while Veronica embroiders.

Melanie, high spirited, wayward Victorian miss, is given some good advice from Lady Charlotte, who knows she has fallen in love with Valentine, but unhappily the advice is not taken.



*Below:* The star-crossed lovers of *Huntersmoon*, whose story once again has an unhappy sequel. It is not until the modern scene that the ill-fated love affair in the Fayre and Graham families has its happy ending.





In the final scene of the play the ghosts of Huntersmoon flit across the great Hall.



The lovers wed at last. Bay (Ivor Novello) and Melody (Roma Beaumont), whose ancestors have loved and lost in the Regency and Victorian eras, are united in the present day and become the owners of the old mansion, Huntersmoon, with which their story is completely bound up.



Other characters in the play are also mysteriously linked through the three periods. Bill (Robert Andrews) and Iris (Muriel Barron) are two others who find themselves truly mated in the happy ending of the play in the nineteen-thirties.

# Ashton's "The Wanderer" Revival

By AUDREY WILLIAMSON

THE revival at Sadler's Wells of Frederick Ashton's ballet *The Wanderer*, first produced in 1941 at the New Theatre but not seen in London for the last three years, has put back into the repertoire a major work of surrealist intensity of feeling and abstract design.

Where in *Dante Sonata*, his preceding work to semi-symphonic music, Ashton had taken as his technical basis the Central European form of barefoot dance and given it a new choreographic complexity and dramatic compulsion, in *The Wanderer* he concentrated mainly on the classic technique and carried its resources further than in any of his previous works. Something of the spirit of Schubert's original song, on which part of his piano-fantasia and the Liszt arrangement for piano and orchestra were used were based, is retained in the essentially romantic centrifugal figure of this ballet; a wanderer in the spiritual sense who, torn and distracted by the physical joys of life, and in the beautiful second movement beset by pain, terror and compassion, seems at the last to attain some form of mastery of his own soul and life's suffering and temptation. Around him the dance flows with an exciting surge of acrobatics adapted to classic technique, of pastoral interludes exemplified by two young children and two lovers in whom passion attains an incandescent and spiritually absorbed absorption, and of plastic groupings which have an intense and at times macabre quality of emotion.

It is a free translation, but one which seems to me justified if it is accepted that the choreographer may express his own feelings with regard to the music and these do not obviously violate its mood andrasing. Ashton has succeeded particularly well in the *adagio*, which is extraordinarily moving and in the revival improved by the graduated sombre beauty of the lighting, and apart from a few awkwardnesses of lifts," which are due to performance rather than conception, only some of the other Olympic-games athletics of the *finale* seems to me to stretch the musical parallel too far. Graham Sutherland's abstract decor and colour schemes enhance the living quality of Ashton's moving pictures, and some simplification in the costumes has revealed the "line" of the dance with a new clarity.

The revival is in the main exceedingly well danced and a heartening suggestion of young talent is perceptible in the male corps. Margot Fonteyn repeats her remarkable display of technical acrobatics, in which her metallic strength and vitality allow a valuable extension of her range, while Farron dances and mimics the part she created with some beautiful pointwork and



Edward Mandinian

ROBERT HELPMANN and MARGOT FONTEYN

a deep sense of anguish and of pity, and in the dances of the lovers, which disintegrated rapidly when they left the original cast, Pamela May and Michael Somes once again reveal a floating lightness of breathtaking delicacy and beauty. Moira Shearer, dancing during Pamela May's illness, has also caught the same cool and exquisite softness of movement, though she needs, perhaps, a trifle more depth of feeling. In two intensely difficult minor parts Joan Sheldon and Avril Navarre are excellently matched, the first showing a new balance in pirouette and the last-named in particular magnificently fulfilling her youthful promise as a technician of exceptional control, speed and style. In the slow movement Gillian Lynne's supple "line" and expression are also noticeable. Only the children miss something of the lyrical quality which Margaret Dale and Deryk Mendel (now in the R.A.F.) gave to their dances in the original production.

It is at the appearance of these two children in the second movement that Robert Helpmann, who dances and mimics the central figure throughout with striking virility and concentration of emotion, achieves his most imaginative detail; a facial expression of such sudden intensity of tenderness, agony and regret that it is impossible not to be almost painfully moved

(Continued on page 32)



Alexander Bender

### ISABEL JEANS

ISABEL Jeans should be induced to write a book on dress, as she knows more about clothes than any other actress of our time. The publishers of her discourse would reap handsome profits, for undoubtedly it would be recognised as the standard work to be studied by all students of acting who would gradually become aware of the fact that garments supplied by the wardrobe mistress are not just given to them for the purpose of "dressing up." They are provided by the management as aids to characterisation and no player can be considered an artist until he or she is capable of exploiting the possibilities of costume to the fullest extent. If Isabel Jeans cannot be persuaded to write a manual on the wearing of clothes, then would-be actresses should flock to the theatre to benefit by her nightly object-lesson in the wearing of clothes.

Hers is a radiant beauty, apparent both on and off-stage, whether clad in one of Mr. Hartnell's inspired creations or one of Mr. Burberry's schoolmarm waterproofs. She has that indefinable glamour which flourishes entirely independently of either dress or beauty salon. The classic story of that great critic, A. B. Walkley, will never be forgotten. When he saw Miss Jeans for the first time in his life, playing 'Cloe' in *The Faithful Shepherdess*, he caused a minor sensation in the stalls by exclaiming in something rather more than a

# My Lady's Dress

by

ERIC JOHNS

whisper, "Who is this adorable creature?" Walkley was an old hand at assessing the value of an actress; he could spot the artist, as distinct from the mannequin, and sensed at once that Isabel Jeans was something far more than a skilful wearer of effective costumes. Not having to consider clothes primarily as a means of personal adornment, she has made it her business to wear them in such a way that they become more eloquent than words. They enhance her histrionic gifts and add point to the part she plays.

By cleverly arranging her cloak for 'Mrs Erlynne's' third act exit in *Lady Windermere's Fan* she makes the curtain one of the most dramatic moments experienced in the theatre for years. It will be recalled that 'Mrs. Erlynne' allows herself to be discovered in 'Lord Darlington's' rooms in order to save the honour of her daughter, 'Lady Windermere.' When the ill-fated fan is found in the young bachelor's chambers, it begins to look as if all Mayfair will soon know that 'Lady Windermere' has been there in an attempt to elope with 'Darlington'—until 'Mrs. Erlynne' sweeps unexpectedly from an adjoining room and saves the situation, as well as the reputation of her daughter, by explaining to 'Lord Windermere,' "I'm afraid I took your wife's fan in mistake for my own when I was leaving your house tonight. I'm so sorry!"

By ingeniously wearing her cloak loosely thrown over one shoulder, Isabel Jeans conveys so much that Wilde left unsaid. By making a daring cross-stage exit with one bare shoulder turned towards the male guests, she heightens the situation enormously, for her casual appearance obviously gives the impression that she has been in the next room some time, possibly expecting 'Darlington' to join her in a tete-a-tete supper. A fine dramatic effect is produced by wearing her cloak with such superb nonchalance, bringing down the curtain on a house astonished to think of a woman of the world carrying deception to such lengths, even to clear her daughter's name.

Never has a dramatist been better served than Wilde by Isabel Jeans. He would probably never have thought it possible to point his line so brilliantly by merely slinging a cloak carelessly over the shoulder. When such great moments occur in the theatre one hears dramatists admit that players are capable of putting more into a scene than was thought possible at the time of writing. Wilde would be the first to pay tribute to this Haymarket "Mrs. Erlynne."

(Continued on page 30)

BY

CECIL

BEATON

HN MILLS

as

Stephen Cass

and

ELWYN

BROOK-

JONES

as

Edward

Sarclet



## "Duet for Two Hands" AT THE LYRIC

THIS is a fine piece of theatre and Mary Hayley Bell, whose *Men in Shadow* showed such promise, is revealed as a playwright with an uncanny sense of situation and a purveyor of strong and telling dialogue.

The story, which is set in the remote Orkneys some forty years ago, tells of a young poet who loses his hands in a climbing accident but receives a new pair by the brilliant surgery of an eminent doctor. The poet's new hands, we learn later, are those of a man hanged for murder, and it is upon the gripping theme of the subtle influence these hands have on the poet that the play is based. The surgeon himself is revealed

as a man of perverted mentality who brings the poet for convalescence to his beautiful home in the Orkneys knowing full well that his daughter Abigail loved the original owner of the hands.

*Duet for Two Hands* is a thriller of unusual merit which holds the attention to the end, particularly as the author has introduced an unusual twist in the last scene. The decor and lighting, which play a big part in this play of atmosphere, are brilliantly executed by Anthony Périsier, who also produced the play with John Mills. The author has been fortunate in the actors and actresses, who give skilful point to every word and situation.



Abigail Sarclet has word from her father, the famous surgeon, that he is bringing Stephen Caw, the poet, to Forsmark, their eighteenth-century castle in the Orkney Islands. (The opening scene. Midsummer, 1904.)

Mary Morris as Abigail and Eppie Munn as Herda Sarclet, the surgeon's sister. (The latter part is now played by Alison Leggatt).



Pictures by Hess, Fox Photos

His hands encased in white gloves, Stephen Caw takes stock of Edward Sarclet's beautiful home, after their arrival.



Abigail and Stephen are drawn to each other immediately, and have an uncanny feeling that they have met before. When Stephen plays the piano that evening he finds himself playing a tune, The Boat Song, which he has never heard before.



*Stephen*: Who played this music to you Abigail? Who was it. You've heard it before. You know it -What is it? What is it called? What music is it then?

Stephen is haunted by the piece of music his hands cannot help playing.



*Abigail*: I hope the Islands like you.

*Stephen*: So do I.

The wild beauty and loneliness of the islands play their part in the strange attraction Abigail and Stephen find in each other.



*Abigail*: Stephen, your hand is hurt.

Edward Sarclet watches with sadistic enjoyment the drama which is being played out between his daughter and Stephen Cass.

*Pictures by Cecil Beaton*



*Abigail*: What's alright! What's alright! What's alright!

The dramatic scene between Abigail and her father, when she realises with horror the perverted motives behind his strange behaviour.



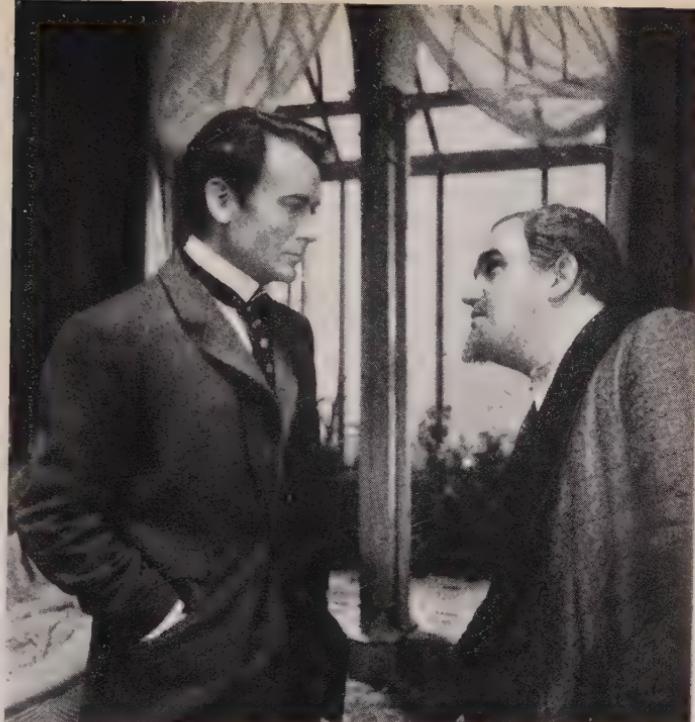
*Stephen*: You rend my heart with your tears and your roses and your folded hands. Stephen has fallen completely under the spell of Sarclet's elfin-like daughter over whose life a deep shadow is falling for the second time.



A tense moment toward the end of the play when Stephen, his suspicion aroused, forces the truth from Sarclet. He learns that he is now the possessor of the hands of the man that Abigail once loved and who was hanged on a charge of murder. He begins to understand his strange feeling that he had been at Foisinard before, and the awful significance of having a murderer's hands begins to dawn on him.

*Stephen*: You need never have brought me to thearkneys, that was unfor-  
giveable and damnable.

Under Stephen's con-  
demnation and fierce  
questioning, Sarclet  
breaks down and, re-  
vealing the depth of  
his own guilt, throws  
new light on the  
dreadful story.



*Stephen*: Gerry—it's all  
over now, rest, rest!

The thrilling end of  
the play. The spirit  
of the hanged man,  
which has haunted  
Stephen through his  
hands, is at rest at  
last. How death  
came to Edward Sar-  
clet it would be unfair  
to divulge; sufficient  
to say the play ends  
in an atmosphere of  
tense drama.



## Perth Theatre Company

by GEORGE FEARON

### Left:

James Bridie addressing the audience after the 1945 Perth Festival's opening performance of John Laurie's production of *Hamlet*, with David Steuart as the Dane, on August 27th. (Photo by Perthshire Advertiser).



FOR ten years the Perth Theatre Company has provided this lovely Fair City with its dramatic fare; for ten years the management have hesitated to use in public the title Perth Repertory Company. Why? Miss Marjorie Dence, co-founder with David Steuart of this unusually vital Company, explained that Perth has always confused 'Amateur' with 'Repertory' and so, in order that confusion might be less confounded, Perth Theatre Company was adopted as the most suitable name. Repertory denotes repertoire and by no possible stretch of imagination can the normal repertory company claim that it has a repertoire of plays. Repertory, now a misnomer has stuck to us ever since the glorious days of 'Rep' in Glasgow before the last war and the brave venture of Miss Horniman in Manchester a few years later.

Whether we are to call Perth a Repertory Company or merely a Theatre Company is of little matter. What does matter, and is so important to the Theatre in Scotland, is that for ten years they showed the way so that Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee, fired by their example, now possess flourishing permanent Repertory theatres of their own.

How did it come about that Perth—a little City—was chosen for the task which fell upon its shoulders? Miss Marjorie Dence, a repertory actress with a small amount of capital, wanted a theatre. David Steuart, a promising young actor, whom she had known since they were at London University together had similar ideas. Perth Theatre was in the market. They bought it, lock, stock and barrel, and on September 23rd, 1935 the Company made its bow with *A Rose Without A Thorn*.

The audience on that first night filled the theatre. Some came to criticize—all went away delighted but sceptical. 'Three months, wouldn't give them a day longer' was the general feeling. Three months passed, then three years when they gave a Command Performance of *The Fourth Wall* before their Majesties at Balmoral—then came 1939. The Company now, firmly established, were sufficiently ambitious to

launch a Perth Theatre Festival somewhat on the Malvern lines. It was a huge success and lasted a fortnight. In addition to plays by Shakespeare, Shaw, Tchekov and Bridie there were guest artists, guest producers and lecturers.

It was obvious that Perth with its historic background, its fast flowing river and its distant hills was the perfect setting for such a venture. It was to be an annual event. Perth was to be to Scotland what Stratford-on-Avon and Malvern are to England.

Almost before the excitement had died down those first sirens were being sounded. The Theatre was closed to open a few days later with a smaller company who were prepared to suffer any hardship so long as the curtain went up each night. They formed themselves into a self-contained community which worked and lived on a communal system. They slept in the theatre, cooked in the theatre, eat in the theatre, cleaned the theatre, took over the box office, made and shifted scenery, by a miracle found time to rehearse and acted at night. The houses were woefully small; their pocket money, so dependent on the size of the audiences, was seldom more than 10/- a week.

With the war their country patrons ceased to support them—transport would not allow. The difficult task of winning over enough city dwellers from a population of about 30,000 took years to accomplish. To-day the City supports its Company well but not well enough. To-morrow, with the return to normal of the 'bus services,' the country patrons should begin to take a regular interest once more.

Sometimes this brave and 'happy band of brothers' have toured the Highlands, The Borders and Northern Ireland, taking their plays to some of the remotest places it is possible to imagine. Audiences, starved of the drama, trudged miles on foot, pedalled their cycles, came in carts, the few with a basic ration used a car. Many a four seater Ford carried eight to the play. Shakespeare was always a sure draw—*Henry The Eighth* and *Hamlet* particularly so.

The Communal system still exists though in much modified form. The cast now live in flatlets taken over by the Theatre and they eat in a large house owned by a local lady who has the welfare of the Theatre at heart. Instead of the problematical 10/- a week

(Continued on page 32)

# Priestley on the Russian Stage

by SIMON DRIEDEN

J. B. PRIESTLEY is one of the most popular English writers with Soviet readers and theatregoers. His *Good Companions* was published in large editions and widely read, while *Daylight on Saturday* and *Blackout in Greyley* received very favourable welcome from critics and readers. There is a long waiting-list as a rule in the public libraries for his books, which give a vivid and realistic picture of life in present-day England.

The staging of his plays *Dangerous Corner* (which was a success at twenty theatres in this country); *Cornelius*, and *Time and the Conways*, did much to contribute to his popularity. The first-named was cleverly staged by Grigori Kozintsev, the well-known film producer, and Nikolai Akimov, the artist, at the Leningrad Comedy, and was one of the most important of pre-war productions.

Priestley's very definite anti-fascist position during the war, his radio talks, in which he showed himself a passionate advocate of the justice of the United Nations' cause, strengthened the authority and popularity of this progressive English writer in the Soviet Union. It is understandable then, that when the Moscow Actor's Club, the headquarters of the All-Russian Theatre Society, recently announced that Priestley's work would be the subject of a paper to be read there, the auditorium was crowded with theatrical people, artists, musicians and writers. Solomon Mikhoels, the actor, made an interesting introductory speech. Professor Mikhail Morozov, known in Moscow for his researches in English literature and particularly for his Shakespearean studies, read a comprehensive paper on Priestley. Following this, scenes from *Dangerous Corner*, *Time and the Conways*, and *Blackout in Greyley* were performed by actors from the Moscow and Leningrad theatres.

Rehearsals of the new Priestley play *An Inspector Calls* are going on at the Kamerny Theatre—the premiere was expected in July). The play, which was only completed this spring, is being produced by Alexander Tairov, People's Actor of the Republic, and director of this theatre, and Leonid Lukianov, Merited Actor of the Republic. Eugene Kovalenko is designing the settings. The leading role of the inspector is played by Pavel Gaideburov.

The theatre is very enthusiastic about this new play, we were told by Tairov, who finds the conception striking and the

idea profound. Its dramatic form has a certain virtuosity. And although the action takes place in 1912 and is in the same room all the time as is so often the case with Priestley, the play is definitely contemporary in its scale and the problems that move mankind today. His originality, his way of building up his subject, the dramatic structure of his plays is such that he leaves the impression of having seated a whole world around a dinner-table, while in the destinies of each person he makes you feel the breath of large social strata, societies and states.

The world cannot be divided up; in connection with the discussions on post-war organisation to secure peace in the world, on the sense of responsibility that everyone and every nation must feel for the fate of mankind, the thesis of the world's indivisibility has acquired added significance. All this is reflected in this new play. It is the more interesting for the Soviet theatre because, as is generally acknowledged and as the author himself has said more than once, it shows Chekhov's influence. Another influence that is felt is Gogol's; in the play's conclusion there is a kind of echo of that famous "dumb-show" scene at the end of the Russian writer's *Inspector General* (Revisor), when the real inspector turns up.

Something very much in the spirit of today is heard in the observations of Priestley's inspector, who holds that we do not live separately, but are parts of the same living organism and are thus answerable for one another; and if people do not realize this the time will come when they will have to learn the lesson in fire and blood and torment.

Priestley's new play will be produced later by other theatres. At the Leningrad Comedy Sergei Yutkevich, the well-known film-producer, is preparing to stage it; Efim Brill is working on it at the Sverdlovsk Dramatic, and Vladimir Nelli-Vlad at the Kiev Theatre of Russian Drama.

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Since this article was written Mr. Priestley has himself gone to Russia, and arrived in Moscow with his wife some days ago for a six weeks' stay in the Soviet Union. Incidentally, this is the first time a Priestley play has had its first performance outside the author's own country.

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*An interesting article on the Soviet Puppet Theatre, by A. Kiprensky, will be included in the November number.*



OFFERS

Programme No. 2

# CONTRAST

TWO STUDIES IN AUDIENCE REACTION: FROM 1876 TO 1935

IN *The Round Tower* AND *Waiting for Lefty*

PERFORMED BY

MEMBERS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE GROUP

PRODUCTION—ANTHONY WALTER & PHILIP REMINGTON

SUNDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JULY

JUST a German barrack hut, to begin with. But, after two months of planning and spadework by prisoners-of-war, it became a theatre that thirteen thousand men will well remember.

Volunteer squads brought in bricks by the handful and barrowful. An orchestra pit was sunk to take 40 members and instruments, with a tunnel running backstage. Prompt box was built in, dressing room erected, stage laid down, walls painted and decorated, electrical fittings installed—including artistic “light-ups” either side of the proscenium. A sloping auditorium was added later, with wooden forms marked off to provide 550 numbered seats.

A box-office and tiny foyer completed the entrance which proudly bore the sign, “The Empire,” a name chosen by popular vote and appropriate to the assorted camp personnel of Stalag 4b, Muhlberg-on-Elbe. Opening night came early in January, 1944. Seven hundred squeezed in that evening, welcomed at the door by a uniformed commissionaire and shown to their seats by smartly-dressed ushers, to see the first show—a quick-pace musical revue entitled, *Muhlberg Melody* of 1944.

Well over thirty productions were to follow. Too long a list to enumerate. At random, I recall the first drama, *Outward Bound*, put on by South African professional producer Nehler Abrahams; the very suc-

Story

of a

## Stalag Stage

by

JOHN McMILLAN

- An ex-prisoner-of-war contributes this vivid story of how a theatre was organised with brilliant success in a German prisoner - of - war camp.

(Left) :

One of the many striking posters which were used to advertise the plays in Stalag 4b. Art souvenir programmes were also produced by hand by the camp's artists.

cessful series of Hart-Kaufman comedies; *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* and *The Women*, respectively produced and co-produced by Roy Goodhind, who took an ex-prisoner company to the Duchess Theatre to give London a taste of stalag talent last July.

On the variety side, among many were Bill Rae, of Hughie Green's Gang, and Nat Hoffman, from pre-war variety and Radio Luxembourg. For settings and decor we relied largely on Paul White, an artist from a family long connected with the entertainment world. For female leads we had a definite find in Charles Phelps, a young Ipswich man with a remarkable gift of interpreting the feminine and keen theatre sense: he also produced *No Time for Comedy*. Many catchy songs and lyrics were the work of Eric Hurst, song and show-writer, some of whose songs born in captivity are due now on the English market.

The list could go on. I must content myself by mentioning finally the excellent work of Philip Remington and Anthony Walter, who, besides producing and taking leading roles in normal camp productions, inaugurated a separate Experimental-Theatre Group whose presentations constituted Sunday and special shows. Phil Remington's associations with E.T.G. date back to before the war, while Tony Walter will be remembered at Unity Theatre for his earlier work there.

The range of productions included drama, comedy and musicals, revue and variety, swing sessions and band shows, classical concerts, and a physical culture presentation which had surprising success. The usual run was of 10 to 14 days, with a few days' interval between shows for dress rehearsals and final touches. There were often two shows running concurrently—a band show or matinees and a play in the evening.

Musicians, costumiers, wig-maker, milliners, make-up men, electricians, carpenters: we owed a debt to them all. Like all good stage folk, they carried on through good times and bad.

Where did props and other supplies come from? Firstly there were the theatre pounds—cigarettes taken at the box office at the rate of one per booked seat. Some 10,000 cigarettes in all were paid in at the Empire; these bought or hired materials of all kinds from the Germans. Civilian suits, otherwise unobtainable, were thus obtained under strict check, while Max Factor make-up came in from Leipzig.

After that came the long suit: improvisation. Material bought or gifted from prisoners' clothing parcels was made into rear-literal "creations" in the theatre wardrobe. About 300 costumes were made in all. Old Italian ground-sheets, dyed and ornamented, were transformed into curtains and backcloths. The carpenters, working on discarded Red Cross crates and scrapwood, produced period suites that looked flawless. A bathchair needed for *The Man Who Came to Dinner* nearly beat them, but at the last minute the camp infirmary wheeled one out.

Plaster busts, paintings, portraits and murals, and sundry "copies" of British

or American newspapers, were among the props painstakingly produced in camp. A mike was made for crooners. Art souvenir programmes, each hand-done, were made for many of the shows, and very creditable posters advertised forthcoming attractions at the theatre entrance. Scripts and acting editions came from Geneva or arrived in book parcels from home; in most cases parts had to be laboriously copied out by hand.

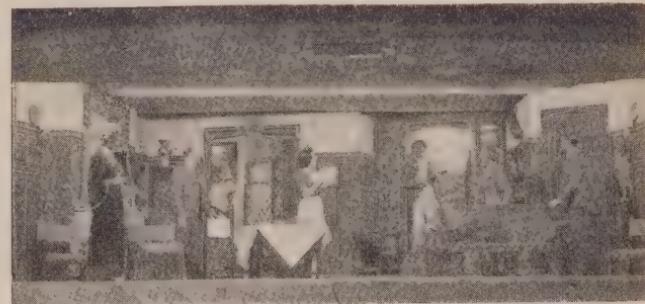
Metalwork was an art on its own. A masterpiece suit of armour graced the toney interior set of *The Dover Road*—old tins and a hammer made it.

I remember, at one urgent stage, collecting boxes being passed round the camp for nails. For weeks prior to *The Barretts*, many hairy faces paraded in camp as the male cast, hard-up for whiskers, solved the difficulty by cultivating the real thing.

Meeting each difficulty as it came, the Empire carried on to the last full-run production before the Russians arrived: *The Women*. Coproducers Roy Goodhind and Ian Arthur were certainly ambitious there. Twenty-five players took the 42 female parts, 90 costume-changes were involved—but, after three months of preparation, it went on and "got across."

It was about this time that The Empire was accidentally strafed by advancing American fighter. Seats were punctured, but luckily no one was hurt.

In any case the players were accustomed to "strafing" for the slightest fault from critics of the camp press, who included many professional writers and reviewers. And that, after all, was the highest form of compliment: to be accepted and judged purely on the professional standards which The Empire in many ways achieved.



This scene from the camp's production of *The Dover Road* will give some idea of the elaborate sets achieved by improvisation.



The cast of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* take the curtain with the camp orchestra below. It was no light task to attempt plays like *The Barretts*, with its period costumes and strongly drawn women characters, but Stalag 4b Theatre stopped at nothing, not even *The Women*!

# Entertainment under the Nazis

by BASIL C. de GUERIN

*A Channel Islander sends this account of the splendid part played by the theatre in the Channel Islands during the grim years of the German Occupation.*

THE German Occupation of the Channel Islands had the effect of stimulating that love of the theatre which was always an outstanding feature of the social life of the islands.

After the initial period of adjustment of existence to the rule of the Nazi, the public began to tire of the cinema, with its compulsory injections of German propaganda and, as no alternative was possible to procure from an outside source, sought the remedy in its own ranks.

The search was definitely successful, both as to quantity and quality.

On Guernsey alone no less than five distinct companies of players; two casts for musical comedies; a stock variety company; and numerous concert parties were all well patronised on each of the frequent occasions on which they appeared.

It was estimated that when all these groups were at the height of their activities, during 1943, that a total of some 500 persons were engaged in the entertainment of their 20,000 fellow-islanders.

Audiences and local newspapers alike were critical, and that the former were by no means confined to relations and friends of the players is shown by the figures of one entertainment committee who, in a 19 week season, put on 75 performances by 8 concert parties before a total attendance of 75,000 persons. The record single attendance at these was 7,100, when £145 was taken for charity.

Among the 'legitimate' companies a very high average of ability was established and maintained, and one or two 'discoveries' were made that might yet bear fruit if transplanted to wider fields. Virtuosity was encouraged and ambition led to the presentation of some real 'test' plays, which were however, on the whole, successfully negotiated.

Of these *Night Must Fall*, *Ghost Train*, *A Murder has been Arranged* and *The Wind and the Rain*, must be mentioned as the high-water mark of Guernsey's "Regal Players," who also put on eleven other plays, varying in degree both in substance and in execution.

Light comedy was the aim of the remaining companies, and they achieved their object with commendable regularity.

Both Jersey and Guernsey were fortunate in the possession of their own local playwrights and composers, and each island was thus able to stage some very ambitious and colourful revues in which the choreography was a home product well up to professional standard. Casts of over 50 were

accommodated in these, the only limitations placed upon the ambitious novice being those of stage space.

Although each of the two islands possessed at least one theatre suitable for any style of entertainment, it was never possible to rely upon the use of any particular venue too far ahead. The Germans were liable to step in at any moment and commandeer it for the use of their own travelling troupes of players. If, on doing so, they found anything not to their satisfaction, such as lack of heating in the dressing-rooms at a time when the islanders were totally without fuel, then the Manager was accused of 'sabotage,' a charge which covered a multitude of sins.

German censorship was also strict. The script of all proposed plays, and entertainments generally, had to be passed by the Nazi Press Censor who was also Entertainments Officer and was not always blessed with an appreciation of the British sense of humour. In such circumstances it was not a pleasant job for a producer to have to go through the entire book of say, *Charley's Aunt* or *Tons of Money* before a hard-faced audience who was scared to death of having his leg pulled and possessed the power of jailing the unfortunate reader if his suspicions were aroused.

The islanders have every reason to thank those who gave of their time and their gradually dwindling energy to the entertainment of their fellows. Without such distractions life would have been even more grim than it was during those five long weary years, for the last three of which all wireless sets were forbidden to the civilian population.

It is proposed that certain of these local companies shall continue now that the Liberation has lifted the mental black-out. There are many players who will be welcomed back to the boards again and, good as they were during Nazi domination, they should go to far greater heights now that the atmosphere is once again cleared.

**FOR SALE.** "Theatre World," July, 1943, to August, 1945. Excellent condition. Offers to S. McVey, Park House, Windermere.

"**THEATRE WORLD**" back numbers for sale. December, 1941, to May, 1944, inclusive. As new. Offers to Box No. 24.

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**FOR SALE.** "Theatre World's," from January 1939, to the present day, August, 1945, except May, 1939. Best Offer. Andrews, University Settlement, Ducie Road, Lawrence Hill, Bristol, 5.

# Whispers from the Wings

BY  
LOOKER ON

If London followed the example of New York and offered an award for the best performance of the current year it would go, without a shadow of doubt, to young Emrys Jones for his masterly conception of Lachlen, the Scottish sergeant in *The Hasty Heart* at the Aldwych. The play is a moving story of transformation of character, and Emrys Jones brings it to life with a poignancy and sincerity that makes his performance something to be seen and remembered.

When the curtain rises he is a dour Scot, distrusting his fellow-men to the extent of refusing to accept a cigarette or even the span of a magazine. As he has only six weeks to live, his fellow patients in the Assam-Burma frontier convalescent ward persevere in their determination to make life as pleasant as possible for him, though he only returns their kindness with insults and scorn. By the time the curtain falls they manage to wear down his resistance and make him a reasonable human being, appreciating the warmth of human friendship and only too glad to spend the last weeks of his life with such good-natured companions. It is a part offering opportunities for superlative acting, but in the wrong hands it could easily become an embarrassment to the audience. Emrys Jones plays it with rare sympathy and understanding in the best tradition of the theatre; one moment we are on the verge of tears; the next we are roaring with laughter; and finally we go home pleasantly exhausted, but completely satisfied.

This latest recruit to the ranks of West-End stars spent his early youth in Manchester. There at the age of seven he appeared in Chapel dramas, produced by the Welsh colony, ever desirous of preserving their national culture. He played parts in Welsh and in English, which may account to some extent for the ease with which he has acquired the Scottish accent in *The Hasty Heart*. People who saw him in those early days prophesied a brilliant future for the young Welsh boy and encouraged him to take up the stage seriously. Consequently, James Bernard of Manchester shouldered the



John Vickers  
**EMRYS JONES**

responsibility of his training and thus put a second promising actor on the road to stardom—the first being Robert Donat, who received early tuition from the same man.

His first professional experience was gained in Shakespeare, on tour with the Donald Wolfit Company, when Phyllis Neilson-Terry was leading lady. He enjoyed playing even the smaller parts since blank verse has a curious fascination for him. One of his most cherished ambitions for the future is to play Iago in *Othello*, an interesting choice for an actor whose youth, looks, and temperament obviously earmark him as an ideal Romeo.

Intensive repertory seasons in Manchester, Southampton, Swansea and Peterborough, as well as a tour of *The Late Christopher Bean* with Edith Evans, paved the way for Emrys Jones to make his West-End debut, as Malcolm in the Gielgud-Frangcon-Davies production of *Macbeth* at the Piccadilly.

*Continued overleaf*

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## **My Lady's Dress** (*Continued from page 18*)

Her last act japonica pink morning assemble which provoked a round of applause all for itself on the first night, tells another story. The colour of a garment has enormous significance and this vivid pink was chosen to label 'Mrs. Erlynne' as *de classe*. There is a shade of overstress in the colouring suggesting a woman not accepted by London society, an outcast compelled to live on the Continent, as penance for past transgressions. Cecil Beaton's japonica pink tells much of the secret 'Mrs. Erlynne' is really so anxious to hide from us.

It is obvious that Miss Jeans has been clever enough to work hand-in-glove with Mr. Beaton, who designed splendid costumes that capture the gay flamboyance of the Nineties. She has always maintained that the actress must never be a mere dummy for showing-off a dress designer's masterpieces. Above all, she must enjoy wearing his creations, and the best way to bring about such a state of affairs is for the actress and the designer to work in the closest collaboration from the outset. The author creates the character; the actress has certain ideas about playing it; and she appeals to the dress designer to assist her in conveying her particular impression to the audience.

Clothes help to create those vital first impressions; they have a face value that cannot be overlooked. When we see people for the first time we judge them almost entirely upon their clothes. Choice of style and colour, and the way clothes are worn, can convey a good deal of information about a person with whom we have never exchanged a single word. It is the same with the character in a play. When she makes her first entrance we take stock of her at a glance and form an opinion at once, before she has time to deliver her first line. A vulgar woman chooses vulgar colours; a woman of exquisite refinement dresses with admirable restraint, and such traits of character can be conveyed by the dress designer and made apparent to the audience from the first second they set eyes on her. It is most essential that the actress and the designer go into conference about each model; the discussions must be friendly, with each party prepared to see the other viewpoint and to make necessary allowances. Under such conditions the actress will gain pleasure in wearing clothes she likes and understands. The designer will enjoy creating them with a clear purpose in view, namely, helping the player to project the author's particular conception of the role.

Clothes are often the easiest means of enabling an actress to step completely outside herself into the character she is playing. Period underwear, for instance, makes her immediately conscious of the mood of former times. Old-fashioned satin corsets

transform her 1945 silhouette beyond recognition, and voluminous petticoats with their gentle silken rustle can work wonders in translating her back to the Nineties and suggesting the deportment and characteristic gestures of those times.

Isabel Jeans is to be thanked for many memorable performances. I recall 'Zelie de Chaumet' in "*The Rat*"; 'Maigery Pinchwife' in *The Country Wife*; 'La Gambogi' in *The Happy Hypocrite*; 'Irene' in *La Prisonniere*; 'Amytis' in *The Road To Rome*; and 'Lucy Lockit' in *The Beggar's Opera*. These six women of different period, age, and country wore clothes ranging in style from ancient Rome to modern Montparnasse. Just as some people have the gift for languages, so Isabel Jeans has this flair for wearing clothes of any time and place, and wearing them in such a manner that they endow her part with richer colour, keener insight, and deeper understanding.

## **Whispers from the Wings** (*Cont.*)

Later he took over the leading part in *Flare Path* and was so good that scores of playgoers went to the Apollo a second time to enjoy his refreshing interpretation of the young R.A.F. pilot. Now *The Hasty Heart* gives him a tremendous opportunity which he has taken with both hands, and with such rare restraint and intelligence that he has become a topic of conversation with managers and playgoers in the West-End. His complete success is fully acknowledged on both sides of the curtain.

Film magnates have not been slow to realise this young man's screen possibilities. His early success as the Welsh wireless operator in *One Of Our Aircraft Is Missing* justified their faith in him and proved his features were distinctly photogenic. His most recent films are *The Wicked Lady* with Margaret Lockwood, James Mason, and Griffith Jones; and *Beware of Pity*, with Gladys Cooper and Sir Cedric Hardwicke.

His well-earned triumph in *The Hasty Heart* has not turned his head. His dressing room bears no evidence of one who plays the successful actor off-stage for the benefit of friends and admirers. It is just the unadorned sanctum of a modest young man who comes up to the theatre each night from his Chelsea flat to give a sincere and moving performance of a part in which he has the utmost faith and for which he has great affection. The one touch of colour in his dressing room is a bunch of purple heather, plucked in Ayrshire by an admirer who is fully qualified to compliment him on his perfect Scottish dialect which never falters on a single syllable throughout the evening. Wales and Manchester have reason to be proud of presenting the West-End with a star who has surely come to stay.

# Amateur Stage

WRITING in *Theatre*, issued by Bradford Civic Playhouse (2/6), Mr. J. B. Priestley has some searching comment on the future of our theatre. Faced with a growing challenge from better English films and television, he rightly says that our theatre will have to be good, or perish.

Mr. Priestley discerns the healthier movement towards repertory, quoting the Old Vic and Gielgud's Haymarket Company as promising examples in London, while there is Bradford's own Civic as a provincial lead for many to follow. As to amateurs, they should stop regarding themselves as competitive rivals of professionals, "but should see themselves as one important layer of the great pyramid of the National Theatre."

His plea for definite policies to guide theatre managements is unchallengeable, and unless and until we do break the hard, Americanised commercialism of our professional theatre, acting as a career and the drama as a medium of creative expression will languish to ultimate extinction.

Two of Guernsey's seven amateur theatrical companies which were created during the German occupation of that island have continued their activities since the war ended, thus providing the inhabitants with their only form of entertainment besides the cinema. These two companies are "The Amherstian Players," who put on "The Middle Watch" under the direction of A. T. Hopkins, a skilled local producer and "The Barnian Players," who staged "The House of Whispers," with William de Carteret producing and starring. The Island suffers from a lack of a real theatre, the only suitable accommodation being occupied by the troops for their own cinema performances.

Northern Polytechnic Theatre, after being closed since 1940, re-opened in September, when the Northern Polytechnic Repertory Company gave a series of performances of Dodie Smith's play, *Touch Wood*. This will be followed by *Double Door* from 11th-18th October, and by *Music at Night* from 10th-11th November.

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**Ashton's "The Wanderer"** (*Cont. from page 17*)  
by it. The part is an exhausting one, since the character never leaves the stage, and probably no contemporary dancer—certainly none in England to-day—could have danced it with such strength and beauty of line and elevation, and mimed it with such a moving power of suggestion.

This revival was a high water mark in a season of uneven quality. *Job*, *Hamlet* and *The Rake's Progress* lent dramatic strength to the few programmes in which they appeared; *Miracle in the Gorbals* consolidated its position as a dance-drama of power and originality, one of the greatest achievements of modern ballet; *Nocturne* and *The Haunted Ballroom*, the first helped by Sophie Fedorovitch's glowingly lovely costumes and the second by Helpmann's miming, revealed new beauties in revival. But *Le Festin de l'Araignée* at least has long since outstayed its welcome, and the performance of many works, in which the best dancers were not often seen, struck me as poor. The highest classical standard was as always set by Fonteyn and Helpmann, who in beautiful new costumes by Leslie Hurry danced two performances of the *Aurora Pas de Deux* with great brilliance and purity of style, and in *Giselle* with equal beauty of technique and expression. There is, however, certainly room for improvement in the quality of playing of the orchestra.

This company, which now goes on an English tour followed by a visit to Germany, will not be seen again in London until early next year, when it will be on the verge of a new expansion and development, possibly including an appearance at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Some important new works are promised, and with fewer performances and a more consistent standard of casting Sadler's Wells should bring renewed impetus to English ballet, and achieve the national status for which its director, Ninette de Valois, has so long worked.

**Perth Theatre Company** (*Cont. from page 24*)  
each member now receives an agreed minimum.

From 1939 to '45 was a long trek which ended gloriously in the holding of the Second Perth Theatre Festival with James Bridie, Scotland's great dramatist, as its Patron. Perth will now be to Scotland what Malvern is to England and Bridie will be to Perth what Shaw is to Malvern.

*Owing to paper restrictions George Fearon will be unable to resume his regular Repertory articles, which were a prominent Theatre World feature before the war. It is hoped, however, to devote some space each month to Repertory Theatres in general. Repertory managers are invited to send any interesting news direct to George Fearon, 105 Clifton Hill, London, N.W.8.*

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